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AUTHOR Miles, Matthew B.
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model for turning research findings into prescriptions for practical action. The model contains the following five interactive elements: (1) clear, understandable research knowledge; (2) relevant knowledge, which is seen as meaningful to normal life and concerns; (3) images of actions which exemplify the knowledge; (4) a will to do something with the knowledge; and (5) the behavioral ability to do the actions envisioned. This model is applied to the implementation of improvement programs in urban high schools. Successful and unsuccessful examples of implementation are presented and compared. The conceptualization of knowledge in this way is a prelude to the development of materials and training formats for people who will bring about school improvement. Case materials and vignettes will be used to help school administrators understand the findings and apply them to their own experiences. (VM)

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PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: HOW TO GET THERE [1]

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Matthew B. Miles
Center for Policy Research

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The subtitle of this paper has a double meaning. People in urban high schools who are aiming at serious improvement need practical guidelines in the sense of "how to get there". Images of the "excellent high school" are not enough for them; paths to excellence are needed.

The second meaning is for us, the path-describers. It is by no means self-evident and clear how one gets from a strong research finding to a prescription for practical action that is usable. This paper will address both issues. It begins with discussion of the problems of research-to-action linkage, and suggests a model for thinking about them. Then it turns to an overview of some of the main findings of our study about the management of urban high school improvement efforts.

For each of five main findings, we then illustrate what might be involved in practical use of the results, and go on to draw some general conclusions.

I should say immediately that this paper is not an academic exercise. The staff of the Project on Improving Urban High Schools [2] is working over the coming eighteen months, in collaboration with a large urban school system, to develop, field test and disseminate research-based training materials and workshop formats that will be of maximum help to people who want to turn

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[1] Read at Symposium on Effective Schools Programs and the Urban High School: The Management of Large-Scale Change. American Educational Research Association Meetings, Washington, DC, April 23, 1987.

[2] Tony Cipollone, Sheila Rosenblum, Karen Seashore Louis, Eleanor Farrar and myself.

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big-city high schools around. So this paper is an early step in that process.

Research to Action: The Problem

Thousands, maybe millions of words have been written on the topic that researchers label "research utilization" and that administrators see as "some sound, practical answers for the problems I face." (For a thoughtful overview, see Louis & Dentler, in press). I don't propose to expand the data base very much, only to note some convictions:

1. People in schools need to know what works. Failure is not an illuminating experience, because it leads to "if only" speculation (the New York version of which is, "If only your aunt had wheels, she'd be a trolley car.").

2. Research-based descriptions and explanations of what works bump very rapidly into the "so what?" barrier. The implications for professional action are often far from clear.

3. Efforts to persuade, prescribe, advise, or suggest action based on research findings also encounter the triteness barrier. It all sounds so familiar, so ordinary, so perfectly reasonable that the potential user looking for exciting, stimulating, helpful advice tunes out. Furthermore, sometimes advice is trite, exactly because the researcher is quite ignorant of what school people are really up against.

4. Many research findings, like the real world, are excessively complex. Well, so is the act of putting one foot in front of another, leading to the process called walking, very complex. It just doesn't seem that way when we do it. Turning genuine intellectual complexity into usable practical simplicity is not easy.

Knowledge to Action: Key Conditions

What we need (says the researcher) is a model for thinking about how knowledge could conceivably affect action, seen from the knowledge-user's point of view. Then maybe we could get past the problems noted above.

Here is a cut at what might be required. Let's assume that some valid "knowledge" has been generated by a researcher. What key conditions must be

present if someone (a "user") is to take some action congruent with the knowledge?

CLARITY: The knowledge must be understood clearly—not be fuzzy, vague, or confusing.

RELEVANCE: The knowledge is seen as meaningful, as connected to one's normal life and concerns--not irrelevant, inapplicable, impractical.

ACTION IMAGES: The knowledge is or can become exemplified in specific actions, clearly visualized. Without such images, knowledge-based action is unlikely.

WILL: There must be motivation, interest, action orientation a will to do something with the knowledge.

SKILL: There must be actual behavioral ability to do the action envisioned. Without skill, the action will either be aborted or done incongruently with the knowledge undergirding it.

Some remarks about this "model". First, the clarity, relevance, and action images aspects do have some research support. [3]

Second, though there's a rough sequence from clarity to skill, the conditions are interactive. For example, seeing clear action images may result in an increased sense of relevance. Or added skill may increase will, since a good outcome is expected.

Many research-to-practice efforts founder on the questions of will and

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[3] Jack Gibb and Ronald Lippitt tested it in a field experiment (National Training Laboratories, at Bethel, in the late 50's). People who only heard a lecture on feedback methods were compared with people who also had a follow-up discussion of relevance, and with people who also practiced feedback-giving. People in all three treatments were observed in unstructured training group settings for their "natural" behavior. The three treatments were ordered as predicted, with the full-scale treatment resulting in the fullest feedback-giving.

skill. Does the user really want to do something? This is such a primitive and fundamental question — and one so overlaid with trite labels like "will power" that we often inattend it. People in schools often complain that nothing can be done, that all power resides elsewhere (in the union, in the Board, in the budget, in the schedule, in the principal, in the department heads). Yet we have repeatedly seen instances of action occurring miraculously on near-intractable problems when someone, simply, decided to act. Triteness to the rescue: "When there's a will, there's a way."

Questions of skill are almost as often ignored. Knowing that X is a workable action that one wants to take is fundamentally very different from knowing how to deliver X. The paths of educational improvement are strewn with examples of behavior that no one knew how to deliver: the team teaching project where no one knew how to get good group decisions; the clinical supervision program where principals had no practice in how to give effective feedback; the science inquiry project where teachers persisted in their use of closed-end questions; the comprehensive planning project that assumed that supplying people with forms to be filled in was enough.

Furthermore, it is sad but true that plenty of school improvers think that skill can be developed through reading, lectures, or watching videotapes. It can't. Improving skill requires doing, practice, getting feedback, reshaping the doing until your doing makes sense, is smooth and gets you where you want. We know this about skiing, tennis, and golf, but not quite, it seems, about the behaviors involved in educational change. There are good skill-development models around (e.g., Joyce & Showers, 1983), but they often don't get used when it comes to day-to-day doing.

Last remark: as Gene Hall suggested at the symposium where this paper was read, there remains the question of "can-do-ability" or belief in one's own

efficacy. That is probably based on some minimal level of skill, and experience of success.

An Overview of Some Key Findings From Our Study

Now I would like to turn to a quick overview of some of the main findings from our study, on the topic of what makes for successful implementation of improvement programs in urban high schools. It is drawn from Miles et al (1986). I present it here as a first cut on the "what works" front, and as a way of dealing with complexity in an integrated way.

Fig. 1 is a causal map that summarizes our explanations of successful implementation, drawn from a detailed cross-site analysis of our five case study schools and relevant survey data from our national sample of 170 schools.[4] It emphasizes factors that are within the control of the principal/school.

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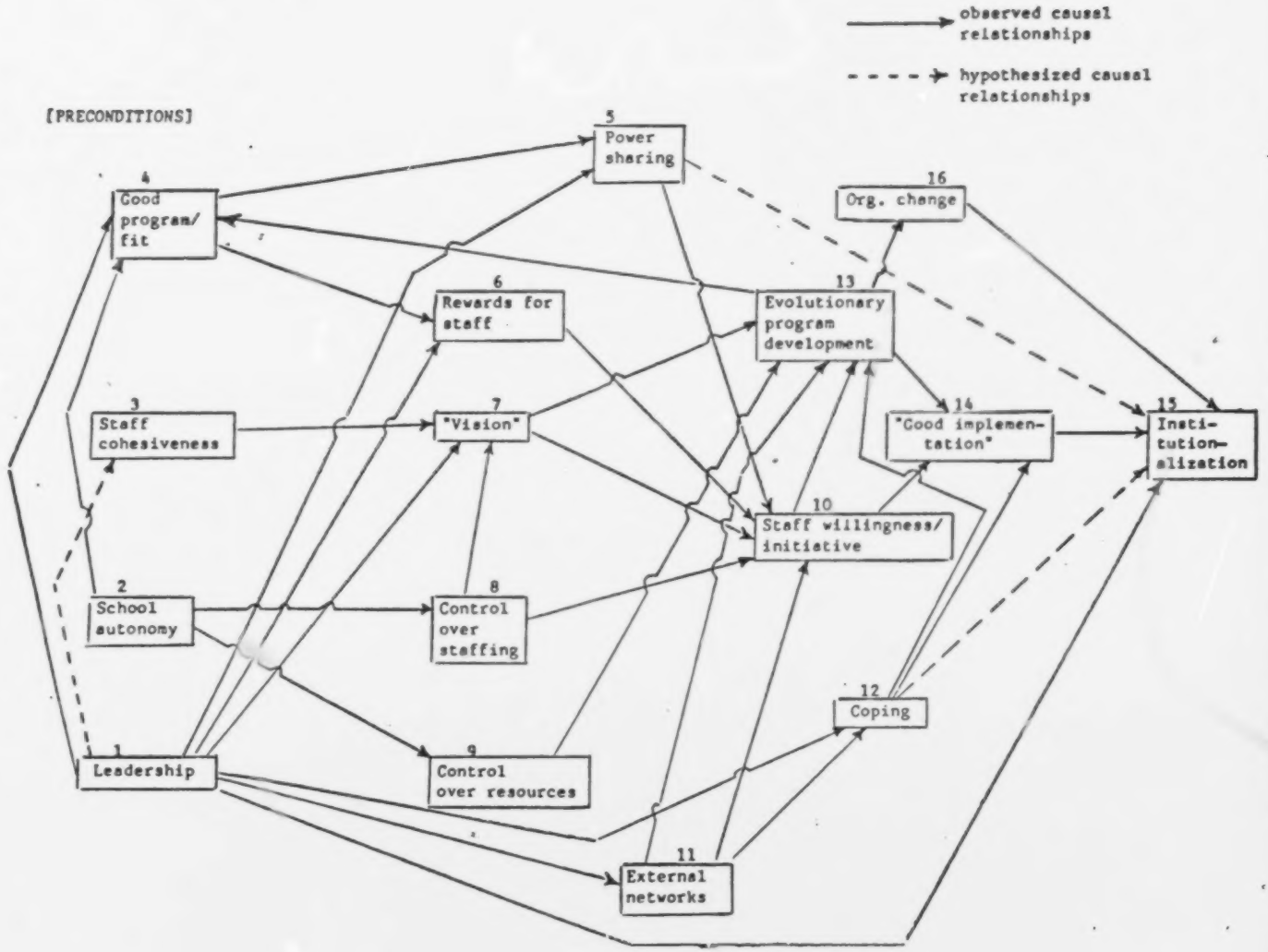
[4] The text following is taken directly from Miles, Louis, Rosenblum, Cipollone & Farrar (1986). See Louis and Cipollone (1987) for an updated version centering primarily on the survey data.

Fig. 1: Factors leading to successful implementation



The causal map will be clearer if we walk through it with some accompanying text. There are four preconditions for success that are only partially controlled at the school level. Three are school context factors: the presence of a principal who has leadership and management skills (1); the existence of some school autonomy (2), whether a result of an active non-regulatory posture on the part of the district, or loose coupling; and a staff environment that is characterized by relatively low conflict and high trust--overall cohesiveness (3).

Another precondition, the design of the program (4) must also be good from a technical point of view. Good design implies the presence of training and technical support, reasonable planning and monitoring procedures, etc. and a reasonably good fit with high schools in general, and the local culture in particular. The program may be imposed from the outside (top down) or internally developed, but in either case, one of the principal's leadership tasks is to adapt or elaborate the program to ensure that it fits well.[5] His or her ability to do so is, of course, dependent in part on the level of school autonomy in the system: highly regulatory systems do not encourage school involvement in design.

A key causal element that we saw in our cases is that programs tend to be designed either outside the school or by principals. Power sharing (5) comes after major decisions have been made (and may be a part of the design itself), but is critical to creating initial staff willingness and initiative (10) to carry through with the program. It is also an important component of making the program "person- independent", thus eventually permitting it to reach a stable equilibrium-- that is, institutionalization (15). Good programs also affect staff willingness and initiative indirectly, by providing rewards for staff participation (6), either simply through public recognition for good effort, through "perks", or through direct success experiences in the program. The opportunity to gain control over resources (9) to help improve their own work also increases staff willingness and initiative (the SIP procedure at Alameda is a good example of this).

The need for a vision (7) of what the school should look like is affected by two preconditions: the principal must exercise leadership (1) in promoting a vision, but the staff must also be cohesive (3) enough to be willing to buy some shared set of goals. Having a vision leads indirectly to good "implementation" by creating an enthusiasm that increases willingness and initiative, (10) but also by creating an environment in which a long term vision of the future permits program evolution (13) --program evolution that is

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Some prior research (for example, Huberman & Miles, 1984; Louis, Rosenblum & Molitor, 1981) has emphasized "fidelity" pressures as important to successful implementation. However, many of these studies have been of programs, e.g., quite concrete, self-contained activities that have relatively minimal impact on the basic structure of the school, or its objectives. In this study we are dealing with something very different, something approaching a reform. An adaptive, evolving approach seems more useful, both conceptually, and as seen in our cases.

always purposive, but reflects growth of activities rather than actively "cutting back" or implicitly limiting implementation. Putting it another way: a good vision provides shared criteria for judging movement. Such evolution also leads, characteristically, to organizational change: new structures and procedures that in turn promote institutionalization (15).

A key issue, reflected in the precondition of school autonomy, has to do with control over elements of school functioning that are critical to good "implementation". In particular, school autonomy (2) leads to an ability to exercise at least some control over staffing (8), either to encourage out-transfers of people who are a "bad fit" to the new vision, or to get good new staff.

This kind of control also leads to increased control over the shared vision, (7) and to some additional influence over staff willingness and initiative. (10) School autonomy also permits some control over important resources (9) for school improvement, such as scheduling flexibility, dollars for training or retreats, support for new projects, and the use of staff time. Resources are extremely important in the development of a large bag of coping strategies (12). Control over resources is also an important precondition for program evolution and growth (13), because it permits experimentation and the shifting around of activities to improve the program and its fit (4) to the school.

The importance of the leadership function (1) is played out in a continuous fashion by supporting and maintaining power sharing (5), and rewards for staff (6), in addition to affecting program design and vision. The latter function is probably especially important in any long term program, since collaborative, decentralized structures tend to be fragile in any educational setting (e.g., they represent a radical shift in behaviors and expectations compared to those in most schools). In this sense, an "effective school" is never really person-independent, although the person providing this leadership function may change, and may not necessarily have the dynamic qualities of a "charismatic" principal. A continued leadership presence is also necessary in maintaining an external network (11) of relationships with organizations that may possibly provide support (note that in most organizations this is a top- level or specialized function), and in helping to develop and implement coping strategies (12) to deal with continuing "normal crises".

This model suggests that the most direct effects on good "implementation" are effective coping; staff willingness and initiative; and program evolution. However, these immediate "causes" are themselves caused by important prior factors, such as principal leadership, supportive external networks, the presence of a shared vision, and ongoing rewards for staff. Still further back, we must note the importance of school autonomy and control over resources, prior staff cohesiveness and a good fit between school and program. In short:

the factors leading to good implementation are embedded in a complex---but clear---network.

Key Findings: from Knowledge to Practice

As an average reader, you are probably suffering from "complexity shock". At best, you may have a sense of how things fit together and influence each other when it comes to turning a big-city high school around. But you have simply been handed a set of abstract ideas, without examples or documentation.[6] The main learning is probably something like: "I should have stood in bed."

Let's look at what might be needed to move from knowledge to practice in each of five key areas, using the general model outlined earlier. We assume a "user" who is basically concerned with achieving better implementation of a substantial improvement program in an urban high school. Examples are principals, vice-principals, planning or steering committee members, department heads. We will not try to repeat what Farrar (1987) has already said about the role of leadership at the school and district level, but focus on the knowledge-to-action movement for each of our key findings.

Fig. 2 summarizes the ideas in matrix form. They are discussed somewhat more fully in the following text. We should note that though the findings are

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[6] For more detail, see Miles et al (1986). The five detailed case studies on which the analysis is based are:

Alameda High School: The Big Fix. A Case Study of School Renewal (S. Rosenblum)

The Slower You Go, the Faster You Get There: The Story of Reform in Agassiz High School (K.S.Louis & A. Cipollone)

Burroughs Junior High School: On Becoming an Effective Middle School (E. Farrar)

Caruso High School: Reaching At-Risk Students (M.B.Miles)

Chester High School: Working Against the Odds (M.B.Miles, with S. Rosenblum)

squarely based on the study, the suggestions on relevance, action images, will and skill are drawn from consulting and training experience as much as from our data. The ideas are not seen as exhaustive, but as illustrative.

Fig. 2: From Knowledge to Practice on Specific Findings: What's Needed to Support Implementation of Change

Selected Findings re Key Factors	Points of Relevance	Action Images	Issues of Will	Needed Skills
1. It seems crucial to develop a clear shared vision (a) of the school as it might become; and (b) of the nature of the change process that will get us there.	Linkage to own hopes for school, and to implicit models of change, rules of thumb.	Drawing and sharing pictures of the school now and in the future. Writing change scenarios, developing a game plan.	Fear of the future. Reluctance to be "out front". Self-doubt. View of existing structures and procedures as "given".	Creative invention. Organizational design. Supporting "dreaming" by others. Communicating intentions clearly. Developing ownership of visions by others.
2. Successful change is most likely when the program is evolutionary, rather than tightly pre-designed.	"Undoing" academic exhortations about "planning", reflection on own prior experience with change projects.	Making a "design" for rolling planning. "What if" projections. Planning practical methods of data collection on progress.	Daring to be open, in a mindful fashion. Tolerance of ambiguity. Resisting pressures for tight planning.	Collaboration during uncertainty. Deriving action implications from data.
3. Supporting initiative-taking by others, relying on empowerment leads to better-quality, committed implementation.	Examination of own support network for change; review of past experience with delegation, shared leadership. Reflection on relation with own boss.	Nominating a likely core group for steering improvement process. Team-building retreat for the group. Designing a "project manager" scheme.	Fears of losing control (sometimes disguised as perfectionism). Reluctance to make power-sharing explicit.	Supporting others' initiative without subtle benevolent control. Clear decision allocation (self, project manager, steering group, etc.) Active initiation without imposing.
4. Substantial, sustained, relevant, and varied assistance is essential; implementation is not a self-sustaining process.	Review of past successful and unsuccessful experiences with assistance. Identifying own needs for assistance, training, skill development.	Specifying aspects of program where assistance needed; specifying assistance req'ts. Locating points of inside/outside linkage. Scanning environment for assistance sources.	Reluctance to seek "help"; mistaken sense of pride, self-sufficiency. Parochialism.	Negotiating clear contract with assistance-giver. Developing local assistance capacity, linking to outsiders. Brokering.
5. Serious change efforts are rife with problems; good problem-coping is central. Proactive, deep coping is often needed; important to tailor coping to the problem involved.	Inventory of past problems, and coping efforts attached to each. Review of coping consequences.	Recurrent problem-listing in steering meetings. Generation of coping alternatives before decision. Routine problem/coping tracking.	Problem denial. Fear of "radical" coping modes. Stereotyped coping modes. Passivity.	Problem-stating in "neutral", non-defense-arousing terms. Imaginative design of strategies; ability to go outside the frame.

Findings to Practice: Further Discussion

In this section we discuss the findings in somewhat more detail, and review the conditions described in Fig. 2.

Vision. Successful change in urban high schools requires two types of vision. The first is a sharable, and shared vision of what the school could look like; it provides direction and driving power for change, and criteria for steering and choosing. Such visions are especially crucial when serious organizational changes (e.g., a new role for department heads) are under way. The emphasis is on broad goals, philosophy, an umbrella over short-term objectives. Multi-goal programs worked well in our schools — if they were part of a general vision.

The second type is a shared vision of the change process. Given the type of change contemplated, and what will be the general game plan or strategy for getting there? As implied by Farrar (1987), such a vision needs to be congruent with central office assumptions -- or buffered from external intervention.

People managing improvement projects usually do have hopes for their schools, as well as usual rules of thumb about change ("Push hard, and give lots of support... Think big, start small...Work where the energy is...Rock the boat gently."). Relevance can be enhanced by reflecting on such hopes and rules of thumb, and making them explicit.

Action images include producing images (graphic and verbal) of the school now and in the future, and sharing them among key actors. Change scenarios and game plans help (though note what is said below about the desirability of evolutionary planning).

Will issues are central to visioning. The main blocks seem to be fear and uncertainty about the future (it's interesting that visions come faster when people are asked to look back on the future, by the way), coupled with

self-doubt and hesitancy about leading, committing oneself, "being out front." Weak visions occur when the present structures and procedures are taken as given, rather than as alterable.

Vision-relevant skills are naturally those of invention and design, accompanied by strong collaborative ability. Clear communication, encouraging others to dream, and developing shared ownership of dreams are especially crucial.

Evolutionary development. The best visions of the change process in our schools turned out to include a strong bias toward steady adaptation, improved fitting of change program to emerging conditions in the school, and vice versa. This goes well beyond the "mutual adaptation" concept (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976), which sounds somehow domestic and small-scale, like the adjustments in daily living that occur in early marriage. In our successful sites, something like reform was going on: both program and school developed steadily. The "downsizing and blunting" that Huberman and Miles (1984) noted did not occur, because the schools were not dealing with small-scale, NDN or IV-C-type innovations, but with rather substantial shifts, such as movement toward a middle school concept, or recasting the school as "a school for children, a university for adults." Under these circumstances, tight forward scenarios are undesirable; those steering improvement need good data on what is happening, and the capacity to take advantage of unexpected developments in the service of the vision.

As with visioning, reflection on one's actual past experience with change projects is the key to relevance and meaning. Letting go of technocratic planning models (cf. Clark et al, 1980) helps convert what looks like "sloppiness" to coherent development.

Actions that help include making "what if" projections, and designing

methods for "rolling planning" that include methods of collecting steering data (and a steering structure for acting on conclusions reached).

The will issues center mostly on living with ambiguity and fighting off pressures from others (and oneself) for tight planning. The tenacity that comes from a deeply-held vision is a great help; being open and evolutionary is thus an intelligent rather than a mindless, expedient stance ("We'll just have to take it one day at a time.").

Holding the steering group together (see next section) for good collaboration under uncertain conditions is probably a key skill, as is that of deriving sensible action steps from data-based conclusions.

Supporting initiative-taking, empowerment. It was very clear in our successful sites that there was a "critical mass" of actively-engaged people, usually up to a dozen or so. Such a core group (one school called it "the class of '69") often served as a formal or informal steering group for the improvement process. And such groups usually occurred in a context of empowerment (including for example, a bottom-up departmentally-based planning process; a strong school site council). Group membership usually expanded over time, avoiding isolation and elitism. By contrast, in our less-effective schools, planning groups were paper tigers. Administrators did not take initiative, nor welcome it from others.

Relevance-making here seems to depend on taking a good look at one's own support network, and one's experience with delegation -- both downward and on the receiving end from one's own boss. Most people can think of examples where they participated in shared leadership.

Useful actions include nominating members of a steering group, taking the time to build its norms and collaborative skills via some form of workshop or retreat. The role of "project manager" is a useful one to develop, since most

comprehensive improvement projects have many different pieces.

Reluctance to make empowerment explicit, and fears of losing control are the main issues of will. Managers who have little experience with power-sharing are often inclined to a zero-sum view of influence: if they have more, I will have less. In fact, empowerment usually means more influence for everyone; the pie expands.

The skills are not easy to learn, because power is so central in organizations. Essentially, one needs to take active initiative without shutting others out -- and to support others' initiative without becoming maternal/paternal. It helps managers very much to realize that they are not necessarily sharing decision power over each and every item on the steering committee's agenda. The key skill is clear decision allocation (I will decide this one, but need your advice; that one belongs to the department heads; this one we should discuss and decide jointly; that one should go to the project manager after some information-sharing.).

Assistance. It was extremely clear in our sites that implementation was not automatic or self-operating. Success typically involved strong, specific, assistance, well-tailored to programs goals and needs, and sustained over the life of the project (not just at the front end). Effectiveness also involved a very wide range of assistance (from at-the-elbow advice to training in planning skills to a self-esteem workshop to a comprehensive middle schools assessment project). Multiple sources, both external and internal (to district and school) ones, were involved. Assistance had a strong impact on successful coping (see below) and thus implementation.

By contrast, in less successful sites, the assumptions seemed to be that little or no assistance would be required, that at most some initial training might occur, and that a "one size fits all" approach would suffice.

For relevance-making, start at home. What, frankly, are one's own needs for assistance, skill training, personal development? And what have one's past experiences -- both successful and unsuccessful -- been like?

The actions required are essentially diagnostic. A careful look at the current and project program, its operators, and their needs for training, consultation, support is typically needed. The immediate and distal environment can be scanned for possible help sources. Considering ways to link internal and external assistance is another key action.

The central issue of will, after parochialism and what Harry Stack Sullivan called in another context "the delusion of unique individuality" (our school, our school system, is like no other; ideas from elsewhere won't work) is probably false pride and mistaken self-sufficiency. Assistance-seeking has to be reconceptualized as a sign of intelligence and strength, not weakness.

Some key skills are those of brokering assistance to needy parts of the school, clear contracting with assistance-givers, especially external ones, and the development of increasingly strong internal assistance capacity (cadres, training of trainers, inside-outside collaboration, etc.).

Problem-coping. All serious improvement programs have problems. In our sites, what might be called "human issues" far outweighed problems of program content. The most frequent problem types, in roughly increasing order of difficulty were those involving attitudes (resistance, skepticism, lack of ownership), program process (uncoordinated effort, delays, weak planning) and resources (lack of time, overload, funds, people). Other problems ranged from unanticipated crises, competing external demands, skill lacks, and powerlessness to the physical setting.

We categorized the processes used to cope with these problems in an array from shallow to deep. The shallowest coping involved doing nothing, or

temporizing/delaying. Then came "doing it the usual way" (short-run coping, using existing meetings or roles, taking follow-up action, and shuffling people into different jobs). Following this was "easing off" (downsizing), and "doing it harder" (symbolic support or advocacy, providing rewards, negotiating, pressuring). A bit deeper than this were "build personal capacity" through training or development, and "build system capacity" (defining new orchestration role or structure, creating new interaction arenas, vision-building and sharing (yes, that's coping too), monitoring, doing rolling planning, and providing assistance. The deepest coping levels involve adding new people (substantial restaffing) or redesigning the system (increasing resource control, empowering/team building, and redesigning roles or the organization).

The clear finding was that unsuccessful sites typically used shallow coping strategies -- avoiding, denying, procrastinating, people-shuffling --no matter whether the problem was easy or difficult. Successful sites, on the other hand used strategies of varying deepness, depending on the tractability of the problem. (The only ones not used were "doing nothing" and "avoidance/delay".) Success in improvement seems to mean the ability to do deep coping -- capacity-building, redesign -- when the problem demands it. "Mild" coping may be a holding action, but usually requires something deeper subsequently. (The parallels to research on individual coping (Roth & Cohen, 1986) are quite strong.)

In short, the old American motto, "If it first you don't succeed, try harder. Your approach must be right." does not work. Reconsidering one's approach, and redesigning it, and the surrounding organization, is the key to implementation success. This echoes what we have already said about the importance of an evolving, adaptive approach.

To put it another way: careful problem-sensing and deliberate coping efforts are the hallmark of success. Denying or wishing away problems usually doesn't work---though there are times when deliberate denial or postponement is wise. Using a wide range of coping efforts, appropriate to the problem, is what will succeed. One reason that "deeper" coping efforts, such as setting up new coordinating roles or groups to steer implementation, work is that they in turn mobilize a wider range of coping efforts.

How to increase the relevance of these findings for a user? The best involves doing a careful review of recent-past problems, coping efforts and consequences. Did the problems stay solved, or recur?

Useful action images center in the behavior of whatever steering or core group is involved in the improvement effort. Deliberate problem-listing, generation of a range of possible coping alternatives before decision-making, and routine tracking of the success of coping efforts are all productive.

The main issues of will are those of passivity and denial. Doing nothing, or pretending that there are no problems, or sure recipes for inaction. Once past these issues, one can encounter a too-narrow, stereotyped repertoire of strategies, along with fear of seeming too "radical". A dogmatic preference for incremental coping usually must be surmounted.

One of the chief skills required, not surprisingly, is the ability to "go outside the frame" in considering coping alternatives. Why not dismiss students to permit full-day in-service? Why not have student project coordinators? Why not work on our own self-esteem, even though it's sneered at as "60's stuff?" Why not send a teacher team across the country to get needed training as trainers? A second key skill is that of locating/identifying problems in the first place, treating them as natural occurrences, and not as occasions for blaming or defense.

Concluding Comments

This journey from findings to practical use is far from complete. It is a sort of prospectus for what might be involved, and one we will need to extend, refine and develop as we proceed in the production of materials and training formats useful to people who care about improving their urban high schools. A few general remarks:

1. The substantive findings, though generated from urban high school settings, are probably relevant to serious improvement efforts outside the cities, and for elementary and middle schools as well.

2. The transfer model (findings, relevance, action images, will, skill) seems useful and worth continued use. Conceptualizing the issue of knowledge use this way permits one to design specific assistance activities targeted to one or more of the domains.

3. More generally: having some model of the process of knowledge use is a useful guide through the swamp of complexity, the morass of triteness, and the Slough of Despond that school people asking "so what?" can easily find themselves in. We need to go much deeper than "advice-giving", or "implication-drawing" when it comes to serious use of knowledge.

4. This paper has probably suffered on the clarity, relevance, and action image counts through insufficiently concrete documentation. In our training formats, we expect to use a great deal of case material, both extended and in the form of brief "vignettes" (Miles, 1987) to help people understand findings, make a clear connection to their own experiences, and visualize specific action alternatives.

5. We actively invite commentary from school people and assistance-givers alike on the usefulness of this approach, and on how it can be strengthened.

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